



# **LIVESTOCK**

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## **CATTLE AND CALVES**

New Mexico's inventory of all cattle and calves as of January 1, 2004, was 1,510,000 head, a 2.6 percent decrease from 2003. The growing dairy industry continues to impact total inventory. The January 1, 2004, milk cow inventory increased 3.5 percent from the previous year to a total of 325,000 head. Dairy producers kept 75,000 dairy heifers for replacement, 7.1 percent above the 2003 total. Beef cow inventory fell to 455,000 head. Ranchers maintained 85,000 heifers for beef cow replacement, 6 percent lower than the previous year's total of 90,000. The inventory of steers weighing 500 pounds and over dropped to 190,000 head, from 210,000 head the previous year. Bulls on hand remained steady at 45,000 head. The 2003 calf crop, including both beef and dairy calves, was estimated at 590,000 head, a 10,000 head decrease from the previous year. Calves on hand totaled 230,000 head. Cattle and calves on full feed for the slaughter market on January 1, 2004, dropped to 115,000 head, 4,000 less than a year earlier. The 2003 gross income increased 24 percent to \$761 million.

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## **RANGE AND PASTURE FEED**

Measurements of pasture and range conditions began in mid-March with ratings of 24 percent at very poor; 27 percent poor; 38 percent fair; and 11 percent good. April reports indicate ranchers were feeding and watering and late calving was reported in some areas due to the drought. Many ranchers reduced herd size as the drought situation worsened. Pasture conditions in June were still on the decline with 38 percent being reported as very poor, 37 percent poor condition, 23 percent fair condition, and 2 percent in good condition. Temperatures hitting 100 in early June were cooled by active storms in the eastern plains. Little change occurred during July as ranchers reported an increasing reduction of herd numbers due to high temperatures and lack of sufficient water to help rangeland grasses. No relief was felt in August and September

as ranchers began thinning cattle and sheep numbers as well as beginning to think about winter grazing. The movement of cattle continued into October with ranchers either selling or moving cattle into winter pastures. Conditions at year's end, again, ended on a down note, as everyone looked ahead hopeful for good winter snows to alleviate conditions in spring 2004.

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## **DAIRY**

The state dairy industry continued its growth pattern with milk cow numbers increasing as well as milk production reaching higher levels. The number of milk cows during the year averaged 317,000 head, up 5.3 percent from 2002. Milk production set another record high at 6.7 billion pounds, up 5.5 percent from a year earlier when 6.3 billion pounds were produced. Milk production per cow, at 21,028 pounds, was up 45 pounds from last year. Among the 20 major milk producing states, New Mexico ranked fifth in milk production per cow and seventh in total milk production. For the second straight year, milk has been ranked New Mexico's number one cash commodity.

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## **SHEEP AND LAMBS**

Sheep and lambs inventory as of January 1, 2004, totaled 160,000 head, down 9 percent from a year earlier. The number of breeding sheep for 2003 decreased by 35,000 head to 140,000 head. Market sheep and lambs remained constant at 35,000. The 2003 lamb crop, at 100,000 head, was 8.6 percent below the previous year. Producer gross income increased 32 percent to \$7.7 million. Wool was sheared from 160,000 sheep and lambs, producing 1.24 million pounds. Value of wool produced increased 24 percent to \$1.3 million as the average price of wool increased 38 percent to \$1.10 per pound.